

9 Years After Worst Terrorist Attacks in American History, Medical Treatment and Compensation Still Not Funded

Kingston, NY - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today stood shoulder to shoulder with Kingston firefighters to call for passage of the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, which would provide medical monitoring, treatment, and economic compensation for those who were injured or made sick by the toxic cloud that lingered for weeks following the collapse of the World Trade Center towers. Due to Republican opposition, the bill failed to achieve the high, two-thirds majority required for passage under the "suspension of the rules" parliamentary procedure that was used to bring the bill before the House in July.

"It's time to set politics aside and pass the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act," said Hinchey. "Nine years after our country was brutally attacked, it's a tragedy that the men and women who risked everything to save others have still not received the healthcare and compensation they deserve. The firefighters, police, nurses, EMTs, construction workers and everyday citizens who put their bodies on the line to rescue those who could be rescued, salvage that which could be salvaged and repair what damage could be undone after the tragic attacks of 9/11 inspired us all in the months following the attacks. Today they suffer from asthma, emphysema and, in some cases, cancer. We must not allow them to suffer alone. They deserve to be treated like the heroes they are."

The current program to assist responders fails to adequately provide necessary medical services. The James Zadroga bill would create the World Trade Center Health Program to monitor and treat responders and community residents for health conditions related to the terrorist attacks. The bill, which would cost \$7.4 billion over the next ten years, is fully paid for by a provision preventing foreign multinational firms that are incorporated in tax haven countries from avoiding tax on income earned in the U.S.

The bill builds upon the existing, unauthorized federal program administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that provides monitoring and treatment services through medical Centers of Excellence to responders and community residents affected by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. The Zadroga bill would also reopen the September 11 Victim Compensation Fund of 2001 (VCF) to provide compensation for economic damages and losses to first responders, recovery workers and others injured in the aftermath of the attacks, including persons who were exposed to World Trade Center toxins during debris removal.

Hinchey went on to describe additional programs and legislation he is supporting to ensure that firefighters in Kingston have the resources and equipment they need to protect their own health and safety as they work to rescue those in harm's way.

"Fire departments are being challenged by growing populations and greater calls for service with fewer staff and substandard equipment," said Hinchey. "These shortages make it difficult for these brave individuals to do their job safely and effectively. That's why I have continually supported the AFG program which has provided equipment and resources to firefighters here in Kingston and throughout the county."

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Hinchey has worked to secure full funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG) since its inception in 2001. Since the fire grant program started, more than \$18.7 million in grants have been awarded to fire and emergency departments in Hinchey's congressional district. In June, it was announced that the Kingston Fire Department would receive \$446,114 through AFG to purchase needed equipment.

Hinchey has sponsored a number of workshops across his congressional district to help fire departments successfully navigate the grant application process. Hinchey is also the author of the SERVE (Supporting Emergency Responders' Volunteer Efforts) Act, which would provide a \$1,000 federal tax credit to individuals who are active members of volunteer firefighting and EMS organizations. For the most current information regarding the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program, please visit www.firegrantsupport.com.